Garrison's Trial Starts Tomorrow

NEW ORLEANS (UPI) — Lame duck Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison will spend the final days of his flamboyant public career in a courtroom as the defendant — not the prosecutor.

Garrison, cleared last September of federal charges that he took bribes to protect illegal pinball gambling, goes on trial in federal court tomorrow for allegedly failing to report all his income at tax time.

HE IS CHARGED with having $60,339 more income than he reported on federal income tax returns in 1965-67.

His 12-year career as district attorney, brought to an end by his defeat by 2,221 votes in a re-election bid last December, will close in two weeks.

But it has been, for Garrison, sensational.

GARRISON, A hulking 6-6, pipe-smoking unknown reform candidate, stunned seasoned political observers with his first win in 1962. He drove the B-girls out of business on Bourbon Street, then became a worldwide celebrity in 1967 when he claimed he had uncovered a New Orleans plot to assassinate President John F. Kennedy.

He failed to prove the case in court but has never abandoned his thesis that conspiracy hatched by the military-industrial complex was responsible for the assassination.

Garrison repeatedly accused the Central Intelligence Agency of participating in the conspiracy, but the only issue to come to trial was his bizarre conspiracy case against businessman Clay Shaw, who was acquited.

IN 1971, THE tables turned and the federal government became the accusor. Garrison was arrested by U.S. marshals and charged with several others in a scheme of taking pinball company bribes and not reporting income.

The bribery trial lasted six weeks. It was marked by Garrison's sudden decision to fire his attorneys and to act as his own lawyer just as the defense was about to present its case.

Garrison was elated with his acquital and, expecting to win re-election, proclaimed he was ready for another showdown.

"I DON'T think the federal government will be finished with me for years," he said. "But conversely, I don't think I will be finished with the federal government for years.

"I'll dance with them again and I'll beat them again."

He called the tax case "blatantly fraudulent" and said he doubted the government could "come ineo court with a straight face on it."

BUT THAT was before Garrison's defeat at the polls.

He started a court attempt to reverse the narrow vote margin, charging irregularities at some precincts, but aborted it just before trial.

Garrison has been silent since the election, but he will serve as his own attorney in this trial, too.